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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/27/2017  
TAGS: [PREF](#) [PREL](#) [TH](#) [KN](#) [KS](#)  
SUBJECT: EVIDENCE OF MISREPRESENTATION BY PERSONS SEEKING  
U.S. RESETTLEMENT AS NORTH KOREAN REFUGEES

Classified By: CLASSIFIED BY DCM ALEX A. ARVIZU.  
REASONS: 1.4 (B,D).

1. (U) This is an action request. Please see para. 7.

2. (C) Summary. Recent events have revealed evidence of misrepresentation of nationality by persons seeking U.S. resettlement as North Korean refugees. At least six persons, and possibly more, of North Korean origin who are waiting for U.S. resettlement processing were previously resettled to South Korea but came to Thailand and misrepresented themselves as North Koreans in the hope of going to the U.S. Post seeks guidance on responding to this development. End summary.

3. (C) Embassy has previously reported by email that Thai authorities two days ago detained two males who were being provided room and board by the USG and who had told UNHCR and Embassy that they were North Korean refugees interested in U.S. resettlement. Yesterday evening, during questioning by Thai Immigration officers, the two men stated that they were in fact South Koreans and showed South Korean passports. When initially apprehended by Thai police, the two had stated that they were North Koreans. Embassy has copies of their passport pages and these contain similar but not identical names (the surnames are the same but the given names differ) and different DOBs than those provided to UNHCR and to us. The passports contain entry and exit stamps which show that after arriving in Thailand in late January, the two had traveled back and forth to South Korea in March and April on short trips. While Embassy has not questioned them, we have heard rumors that some North Koreans resettled to the ROK, upon hearing of a U.S. resettlement option, returned to China, assumed new names, and came to Thailand. The ROK Embassy questioned the two men last night and ROK Political Counselor Choi informed RefCoord today that they had in fact been resettled to the ROK and were ROK citizens. Since they hold valid ROK passports, the Thai authorities released the two men this afternoon.

4. (C) In addition to the two men, the wife in a family of four persons who had also claimed to be North Koreans and were also staying at USG expense told Embassy spouse Korean interpreter yesterday that she and her family were in fact South Koreans. That is, they were North Koreans who had been resettled to South Korea but came to Thailand for U.S. resettlement. She also stated that her family had been advised by brokers in South Korea that in undertaking an effort for U.S. resettlement, they should change their names and dates of birth. The women told Embassy interpreter that

two other families of four and two persons waiting for U.S. resettlement as North Koreans were South Koreans. In the last two days and after the Thai apprehension of the two males mentioned above, another five persons presenting themselves to us as North Korean refugees have checked out of the locations where they had been staying and disappeared. We do not know the reason for their disappearance.

15. (C) Embassy interpreter, when asked, said she also had doubts about the bona fides of others who are currently waiting for U.S. resettlement. When asked if she had similar concerns about any refugees who have already departed for the U.S., she recalled that she had noticed that one male (Bek Eun Cheol, TH-107987) seemed to have many friends in South Korea.

16. (C) It seems that the case of the two males apprehended by the Thai police has opened the lid on a serious problem of misrepresentation by persons seeking resettlement as North Korean refugees. All of the above cases passed the screening carried out by the ROK secondee to UNHCR, whose job is to verify the nationality of those seeking U.S. resettlement. The more in-depth security screening carried out by the ROK on refugees seeking U.S. resettlement had not taken place yet for the real and possible misrepresentation cases above. We do not know to what extent misrepresentation may be a problem with others who have approached the USG in other countries in the region seeking U.S. resettlement as North Korean refugees. Given that the persons involved seem to be changing their names and dates of birth, perhaps the only way to verify that they have not previously been resettled to the ROK would be through fingerprinting and checking with the ROKG, assuming the ROKG fingerprints North Koreans during their processing for ROK resettlement.

17. (C) Action request: We request Department consideration of whether an additional screening step needs to be added to U.S. processing of North Korean refugees, perhaps involving fingerprinting of the refugees, and checking those fingerprints against ROKG records. We also have the immediate question of what to do with case processing that is occurring now. We currently have one case (the last person out of the group of 16 approved for U.S. resettlement by the Thai government) that is in process.  
ARVIZU